

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2638

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2421

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: SOARES ON ELECTIONS

REF: LISBON 2399

SUMMARY: SOCIALISTS' IMPRESSIVE ELECTORAL VICTORY HAS BROUGHT PROBLEMS AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES. SOCIALISTS HAVE NOT RUBBED IN VICTORY BY COMPARING VOTE TO THAT GARNERED BY OTHER PARTIES, NOR HAS PARTY HELD ANY VICTORY CELEBRATIONS. TRICKY PROBLEM OF HOW TO HANDLE THOSE IN AFM DISCONCERTED WITH ELECTORAL RESULTS IS MAIN POLICY PROBLEM FACING SOCIALISTS. LOW PROFILE DESIGNED TO AVOID ANTAGONIZING THE AFM AND OPEN POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE. END SUMMARY.

1. SOCIALISTS' IMPRESSIVE VICTORY IN ELECTIONS (THEY EXPECTED 30 PERCENT AND GOT 38 PERCENT) HAS BROUGHT PROBLEMS AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES. PARTY LEADER MARIO SOARES REALIZES THIS (REFTEL) AND HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY PHRASED SO AS NOT TO RUB IN THE VICTORY EITHER TO HIS COALITION PARTNERS OR TO
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THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM).

2. RESPONDING TO THE QUESTION IN EVERYBODY'S MIND, SOARES STATED IN RADIO INTERVIEWS ON APRIL 26 AND 27 THAT HE WOULD NOT ASK FOR A CHANGE IN THE MAKEUP OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT. HIS COMMENTS EMPHASIZED THE AFM FULFILLMENT OF ITS PROMISE FOR FREE ELECTIONS AND THE RECORD PARTICIPATION OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE IN THE VOTING PROCESS. SOARES ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THE PS WOULD HONOR ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE AFM PARTY PACT OF UNDERSTANDING.

3. SOARES HAS CAREFULLY AVOIDED COMPARING THE PS VOTE WITH WHAT THE OTHER PARTIES, (NOTABLY THE PCP AND MDP) GOT AND INSTEAD HAS EMPHASIZED THE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR THE PARTY ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. HE UNDERLINED PS SUPPORT IN THE INDUSTRIAL BELTS AROUND LISBON, PORTO AND SOUTH OF THE TAGUS RIVER.

4. OTHER THAN A FEW PROCESSIONS OF AUTOMOBILES CAREENING AROUND THE CITY BLOWING THEIR HORNS AND WAVING SOCIALIST FLAGS ON THE 26TH, AFTER ELECTION RESULTS BECAME KNOWN, NO SOCIALIST VICTORY CELEBRATION HAS TAKEN PLACE. SOARES MADE NO PUBLIC APPEARANCES OTHER THAN THE RADIO AND TV INTERVIEWS AND HAS BEEN GENERALLY KEEPING A VERY LOW PROFILE.

5. COMMENT: SOARES, HAVING DEMONSTRATED HIS SKILLS AS A CAMPAIGNER, MUST NOW DEAL WITH THE TRICK PROBLEMS OF HOW TO HANDLE A NERVOUS AFM, WHOSE VOCAL LEFT WING DISCONCERTED AT THE ELECTION RESULTS, IS MAKING ITS DISCONTENT KNOWN PUBLICLY (REFTEL).

6. IN THE PAST SOARES AND HIS SOCIALISTS HAVE HAD PROBLEMS WITH THE AFM DUE TO THE SOCIALISTS' WILLINGNESS TO CRITICIZE THE AFM; THEIR FELLOW COALITION MEMBER, THE COMMUNISTS; AND AFM POLICIES. SOCIALIST FEISTINESS IN THIS REGARD WAS MOST NOTABLE IN THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SINGLE LABOR CONFEDERATION.

7. IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO DATE AND HIS COMPARATIVELY LOW PROFILE, SOARES HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS INTENTION TO FOLLOW A CAREFUL POLICY DESIGNED TO AVOID ANTAGONIZING THE AFM AND OPEN POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE.
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